

Iron County Register

BY ELLI D. AKE.
IRONTON, MISSOURI

CHEERFULNESS.

The following, says the New York Graphic, is a capital instance of thick and light cheerfulness. Charles Matthews, the elder, at the age of seventy-four, and only a year or two from the grave, received a letter from a lady, a young author, who was complaining of the gloom of this world. He sat down and wrote the following:

I am thirty years older than you are, but I have never known a day when I was not cheerful. I have seen many of my friends die, but I have never seen a day when I was not cheerful. At least—I have never seen a day when I was not cheerful.

I can sup upon cold meat and salad, and enjoy myself as much as the day. I can resist your exhortations to take a walk, and I can resist your exhortations to take a walk. I can resist your exhortations to take a walk, and I can resist your exhortations to take a walk.

What is the use of your exhortations to take a walk? I have seen many of my friends die, but I have never seen a day when I was not cheerful. I have seen many of my friends die, but I have never seen a day when I was not cheerful.

And have you not seen the heaven—the Past, the Present, and the Future?

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Thrice Lost in a Struggle for a Name.

BY MRS. R. B. EDSON.

CHAPTER XIV.—CONTINUED.

"Then you will go?" he cried, impulsively. "I feared you had not forgiven my folly and impertinence, as you said, and would refuse my request."

"I consent only because you assure me it is an important matter," she answered, coldly, "and perhaps because you have some claim on the life you save."

While she had been speaking, she had slipped on a little black sash and the crimson and black hood which Ralph remembered so well. It had lain on his bosom once; he thought of it with a thrill that ran through his blood like fire.

They walked on in silence till they were well away from the house, and then she slackened her pace, and said, without looking at him:

"Well, Captain Anderson?"

"I want you to promise not to be offended if I seem impatient. I do not intend to be, and if I am wrong—which Heaven grant I may not be—I ask your pardon for troubling you with the subject at all; do you promise?"

"Certainly. Please be as brief as possible. I do not care to walk far."

"You do not look able to walk—go back and let me call for you this evening," he said, anxiously.

"Thank you, I am quite well."

"Stella, you have not forgiven me—you are like an iceberg, while I—"

"Will you please come to business, sir?" she asked, a quick flush staining the pale of her face.

"I hardly know how to begin without offending you, and yet you said you would not be offended, and so I will take you at your word and begin by asking if you are quite sure your name is Stella Blake?"

He was watching her with fierce intensity, and she was taken wholly by surprise.

"You have no right to ask me such a question," she cried, sharply. "I will not answer you." Simple child! as if that was not answer enough, coupled with the fiery blush that she could not restrain.

"Perhaps I have not, but I want to ask you one thing—your name? Why do you not bear your own name?"

"I have no name," Ralph answered, you know I have not," she cried, sternly. "O, why have you tried to find me out? I had rather die than have been discovered!"

"Viola! my darling Viola!" he exclaimed, rapturously, unheeding her fierce wail of regret, and with characteristic impetuosity forgetting everything but the joyful fact that she was found at last!

"You shall not tell them, Ralph," she cried, wrenching her hand from the strong clasp in which he had caught it. Indeed, it was strange he had not taken her instantly in his arms, instead of simply clapping her hand; it would have been much more like him. But he remembered that she was possibly, possibly because it was possible, he was very anxious to convince her, for some reason.

"Do you mean, Viola—ah! isn't that glorious?"

"Hush!" she cried, looking round in swift alarm. "You must not call me that. Viola is dead, I tell you, just as really and truly dead as if her bones were mouldering to dust all these years."

"But surely you will come back home, now?" he asked, pleadingly.

"No, Ralph; and this is what I ask of you, in memory of the old days when I was an innocent child."

"You are only that now, darling," he exclaimed.

"Stop!" she interrupted, nervously. "You shall not talk to me so! Let me tell you what I began to. If you do not swear upon your honor and manhood to keep my secret inviolate from every human being, unless I give you permission, or a time comes when I shall be beyond caring, then I swear that you will never set eyes on my face again after to-night, if I have to hide in the bottom of the sea!"

"Stella—if that is what I must call you, though my heart whispers 'Viola'—do you want to know what betrayed you more, if possible, than your face?" he asked, smiling, "because, you see, I had never forgotten the little 'Wild-fire' of old, and the superb passions she could get herself into."

"I wish you would never mention those days again! I want them so utterly forgotten as though they had never been. I tell you, the child you knew died long ago—died to every thought, or purpose, or care, save one!"

She spoke hurriedly, imploringly, as if she feared for her own strength, and yet had resolved to die rather than yield to anything which could draw her from this one purpose to which she was, with a sort of insanity, sacrificing health, self-respect, and perhaps life itself.

"I will not leave you to yourself in this way," he exclaimed, hotly. "I have a right to your consideration, and I will listen to me!"

"I shall not!" her eyes blazing. "You saved my life—I did not ask you to do so; I wish—before Heaven, I wish—you

had not done it! I am a stranger to you; an utter and perfect stranger to you this day, forevermore! I ask only to go my way, bitter and desolate as it may be, and that you go yours to honor and happiness. I don't ever want to see your face, or hear you speak again!"

"Do you then hate me so utterly?" his voice suddenly faltering. "I—I thought—I hoped to be your friend; I was so delighted and happy at finding you—I have lived on this hope so entirely for the last few days that—pardon me, I suppose you despise my weakness—I cannot command myself."

He turned away, his strong frame trembling, his face white and pained, his lips very pale, and twitching convulsively, despite his strongest efforts for self-control.

"O Ralph—Ralph, don't!" she cried, sharply, putting out her hand with an appealing gesture. "I have seen—O Father in Heaven, have pity on me! and with a low, passionate cry she broke into a wild tempest of sobs and tears.

Ralph Anderson forgot everything, then. All the fiery words she had spoken, all the mystery that surrounded her present life and purpose, all more, he forgot his tacit engagement to his beautiful cousin—forgot even her existence, forgot in fact, everything but this little shrinking form and tear-drenched face, and the one great fact, which seemed to him at the moment to swell up and overwhelm everything else, that he loved her—loved her with all the force and passion and impetuosity of his strong nature.

"Viola," he cried, springing to her side, "in God's name, listen to me! I love you, child—O Heaven! I love you better than my own soul—better than Heaven itself! O my darling—my darling!"

"Ralph!" hushing her sobbily, and lifting a proud face to his, "how dare you insult me in this way? Not three days ago I heard your promise-making pretty little plans about your wedding—a wedding which might take place at any moment."

A fiery red surged to his temples. Was he in honor bound to his cousin? Was he expecting him to marry her, and had he committed himself irrevocably? The thought sent a thrill of horror through his nerves, for he knew if he wedded her it would be a mockery and a lie, for he did not love her. He knew he had loved her, but that was before he knew what love meant.

"I never asked Blanche Arnold to be my wife," he said, gravely. "I ask you to believe this, at least. I will not deny but she has fascinated and attracted me, and I have paid her attention which no honorable man should pay a woman unless he intends, at least, to give her a chance to accept him. I have a trifle—I did not mean to be one; but once it comes back to me now through the long years—I told you, Viola, that, always, so long as I lived, I should love you better than any one else in the whole world. Do you remember?"

"Yes, I remember," she replied, faintly. As if she had ever forgotten. "I have nothing more to add; it is as true to-day as it was then. It will be true to-day, or fifty years hence, if I live so long, as it is now. And you do remember what you said?" he asked, softly. "Only tell me you have not changed, and I will—"

"Hush!" she interrupted. "If I loved you, and you were free, I would not marry you. Do you remember anything else I said?"

"About your name? You are not going to sacrifice your life and happiness to this chimerical hobby? What does a name matter?"

"I am going to sacrifice everything for it," she said, firmly, the hard look coming back to her face. "I know this much: I have a right to the Montford name."

"The Montford name?" he interrupted, in astonishment, half suspicious that dwelling on the matter so intently had turned her brain.

"Yes, even the Montford name, in which she looks to you. What else could have kept me there, exposed to misunderstandings and indignities, save the one hope and purpose of my life, to discover my rightful name, do you think?"

"But is it possible?" he asked, eagerly. "I—I thought so; I hoped so until to-day. Now I see, but one course—shivering a little, but I shall take it, I think, but you must not betray me. Promise me that you will not tell them—your father and mother."

"I don't think I ought," he said, hesitatingly. "O Viola, give up this insane scheme and come home to us. Your old place is waiting for you—come!"

"Do you wish to drive me away? I tell you, you must keep my secret! And do not call me—that name. I am still Stella Blake until I am Viola Montford. I will never bear any other name until I have that openly and lawfully. O, why did I briefly betray me to you?" she cried, sadly.

"He did not, Stella," he said, the name unwinding. "He does not suspect that I have discovered his secret. Let me tell you how it all happened. You remember that first time that I came to Montford House with Blanche? Perhaps you noticed that I was affected strangely?"

"I—I don't know," she stammered, a painful blush dyeing her cheek at the remembrance of her own struggle for composure before him.

"I thought you noticed it and was offended, but upon my soul I could not help it. The resemblance to Viola struck me—or rather a resemblance to an ideal which had grown up in my mind of what she might be—so strongly that I could not control myself. I do not think I thought of it being, by any possibility, the girl we lost and mourned, and so long, but the face haunted me, and after a time the possibility dawned almost imperceptibly in my heart that it might be her. It was more an impression than a belief, however, until that afternoon, four days ago, when I overtook you coming out of the city. I made two discoveries that afternoon, though I think I had been vaguely conscious of them both for a long time. One of them I know I had," he added, with a glance that told more than his most passionate words had done.

"I left you with the resolution of visiting this Blanche and forcing the truth from him. But after seeing him I changed my mind, and took another

course. I hired a fellow living near there, telling him that I had reason to believe that the girl was still living who purported to be buried under the cross; he had put up to assist me in making an examination, which resulted in finding only a block of wood carefully wrapped in a piece of tattered cloth in the coffin. We replaced it as we had found it, and replaced the earth about as carefully as possible, covering it well with dead leaves. I paid the man fifty dollars for the job, and his promise to hold his tongue, which I am not positive about his doing. I do not remember as I slept a wink the three nights I was away, and to-day, as I drew near you, and the confirmation or disappointment of my hopes, I believe have been handed to me. I am so bewildered, I say."

There is something that needs explanation, the whole thing seems so wild and improbable, that I must believe I am in some sort of a delirium. You certainly will not refuse to tell me something of the history of these past years; you will not deny me that?" he asked, pleadingly.

"I will tell you all if you will pledge yourself to utter and perfect secrecy, and never allude to it in any way in the future, after to-day," she replied, quickly.

There was no other way, for she was firm, and so he promised, making only one mental reservation: "What? If by any chance she ever was his wife, he would tell his father and mother; that would be simply just. But such a possibility seemed very unlikely, just then, though he was by no means inclined to give up without a good struggle with fate."

"You know as far as my departure from Detroit," she began, "and perhaps you think further. But you do not know all. I will tell you as briefly as possible, for I must return. The day was dark and stormy, at least the after part of it, and it was quite dark when we got to Michigan City. The cars were dark, and in the confusion, when we stopped, I did not notice the man's face—the man who took me by the hand and led me from the cars. I mean—supposed it was the conductor. We were to stop to get lunch, and then go to the wharf to meet the boat. I heard a lady say, 'I never could tell how it happened, but I seemed to get separated from the rest, and there was only my companion and myself in the little dingy saloon where we went. There was a pale, flaring light at one end of the room, and we were in a sort of semi-darkness. My companion got some warm drink, and went out, telling me to wait until he returned for me. I was so tired and sleepy, I think I must have dozed a little, for the fellow in the saloon came and shook me and told me that if I was going in that boat I had better run for it."

"Frightened and bewildered I sprang up and darted out the door. I had not gone a rod before a man seized me, in his arms, saying he would carry me. I told him very indignantly that I would not be carried, and I think I must have struggled pretty fiercely, for with a muttered oath the man put me down, but he had turned the street in some way so that I no longer saw the lights from the steamer, but the faint, rapid ringing of a bell in the distance assured me that it was the boat's signal for departure. I believe I was nearly frantic in my rage and alarm. The man caught me in his arms and bent over me and whispered that he would stifle me if I did not be still! Just at that instant a light from a neighboring window fell across his face. It was but only close to mine and I knew it! But only the face, I did not know the name. I had forgotten, but the water below me, I met with its curious yellow bronze eyes. And perhaps you do not know that it was he who lured me away at Detroit, with a promise to tell me who I was?"

"DeVries!" exclaimed Ralph. "Yes, Alfred DeVries. But at the moment I discovered who it was, another man came up, a short, little man with a slow, shuffling gait."

"O save me!" I cried, wrenching myself from DeVries' grasp. "I am going in the boat and he is keeping me!"

"There was a hurried word between the two men, the only thing I could distinguish being something about 'good pay,' and an instant after I was left alone with the little old man, which I had forgotten, but the water below me, I met with its curious yellow bronze eyes. And perhaps you do not know that it was he who lured me away at Detroit, with a promise to tell me who I was?"

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quest, queerest little laugh. "You see this line chap hired me to take care of you, so you'd never come in his way again. I reckon you won't be his, ha, ha."

"You know how extravagantly demonstrative I used to be, and I expect I nearly strangled the poor little old man, for I remember he coughed and choked, and got terribly red in the face, and there were tears in his eyes, but he brushed them away with his coat sleeve, and hurried round and brought out my clothes, and made me lie down, and covered me carefully up. A man came to the door and asked if the little 'un was dead. He said I was just alive, and pointed to the coffin. The man said 'this woman would come over if he were here, and I'm afraid I can't call her if he wanted her, and the man went away."

"We kept perfectly still until after dark, and then he wrapped me up in an old coat, and by and by, somebody outside said, softly: 'Joe.' He went to the door, opened it carefully, and a woman came in. She was such a perfect contrast to him that I laughed in spite of all the anxiety and alarm I felt. She was the plumpest woman I ever saw, looking more like an enormous feather-bed with a string tied round it than like a living, breathing woman. And I can say now that her heart was as large and as soft as her body. Dear Aunt Molly Blake, I doubt if Heaven holds a purer spirit than yours, to-day."

"She is dead?"

"Yes, she died three years ago. From that night until her death she was my warm, true, constant friend. She was Joe Briery's sister, and lived five miles away, in a log cabin, she and her husband and a poor crippled boy. I never saw Briery but once after I left there, until the day he came to his sister's funeral. I knew that I was considered dead, and indeed, at that summer and winter I was little better, but with the spring I grew better. One day Aunt Molly came to me with a blotting paper, and a little rusty key. 'I found it in your dress pocket, dearie,' she said, 'the bright, wool dress you were here, and has been hanging up in the closet ever since.'"

"I took it, spread it out, and saw that it was a letter. My mother had learned me to read writing, and I set myself to deciphering this, but from lack of practice and the illegibility of the writing, it was a long time before I could make it out, and then I could not understand it. But I studied it, and as I grew stronger, took it little by little, its meaning till, child as I was, the whole story was in my mind. The letter was written to my mother, and was full of vague hints and threats and entreaties. One passage declared the writer's undetermined feelings toward her, and his determination to force her to yield to his wishes. 'As my wife you shall never know another care or anxiety,' he wrote. Then again he said: 'You were not his wife, and your child has no lawful claim, but pride might force something from his father, rather than that his son, of whom he was so proud, should be disgraced, as he would be, if the perjury by which he made you believe you was his lawful wife was revealed to the world, for John Montford is a proud man, as you probably know. I don't not but he made that his excuse for not openly acknowledging the marriage! Let me take your case into my hands, Genevieve; give me the right, and your child shall be provided for out of her father's inheritance, even if she is not permitted to bear his name.' There were other passages, but having the same general bearing, and one which referred to 'Harry's sudden death, which the writer believed a sort of judgment for his 'crude deception,' and the whole was signed, 'DeVries.'"

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

Curious Ancient Records.

Many were the expedients resorted to by the early scribes for the supply of writing materials. There was no scribbling paper whereon to jot down tribal memoranda or accounts, but the heaps of broken pots and crockery of all sorts, which are so abundant in Eastern towns, prove the first suggestion for such china tablets and slates as we now use, and bits of smooth stone or tiles were constantly used for this purpose, and remain to this day. Fragments of ancient tiles, which the writer believed a sort of judgment for his 'crude deception,' and the whole was signed, 'DeVries.'"

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